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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Monday, January 9, 1939.

SUBJECT: "NEWER TRENDS IN HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK." Information from Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Farm homemakers seem to be in step with the times, judging from our Washington news today. Our correspondent writes that she's been to see the extension people in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to hear about some of the newer trends in home demonstration work for farm women. I'll read her letter:

"The Extension people say special emphasis this past year is the same as in 1937- on rural electrification, better housing, and consumer education,- although there are a number of other interesting activities. Figures for 1938 are not all in, they say, but in states whose reports are filed they follow 1937 trends quite closely.

"For example, in 1937, approximately 100,000 miles of electric lines were built in rural areas, with some 200,000 farm homes enjoying for the first time the conveniences and comforts electricity provides. This trend continued steadily through 1938. Farm families are buying many electric appliances for the home, in the following order of popularity- radio, hand irons, washing machines, electric refrigerators.

"New York State extension workers have waged unremitting warfare on poor lighting, not only for those who are about to have their houses wired and need help in buying lamps and fixtures, but also those who have had electricity for some time. At least 10 states have issued publications on electricity for the home.

"Better housing efforts range all the way from 'Home-made Homes' in Arkansas to the 'Family Wash-room' project in Maine. They noted especially increased attention to closets for children's clothes and toys, bed-room and food storage closets.

"One family in Arkansas built a five-room house with a screened back porch, doing most of the work themselves. The homemaker worked right along with her husband. The lumber was cut from their own farm, sawed on shares. It was thoroughly dried before building so there would be no shrinkage. Highest items of expense were \$55 for finishing lumber, and \$7 for a bricklayer to assist in building the chimneys. Living-room and dining-room were sealed with well-matched yellow pine, shellacked. Scrap lumber was used for the bed-rooms, which were then papered.

"The wash-room project in Maine demonstrated how an unused room may be equipped for bathing purposes even if water has not been piped into the house. Heat can be furnished by a portable oil burner. A bath-tub with a drain is installed, so that water can be drawn out. Having a wash-room of this sort is often the first step toward a water system and real plumbing.

"Interest in consumer education is growing. When extra cash is available many farm families replace worn-out equipment, buy new furnishings and new clothing. Consumer education takes the form of consumer institutes, shopping tours, wearing tests on garments and fabrics, better buymanship guides for foods, clothing, and furniture.

"A large part of the nutrition program in all states is concerned with getting rural people to acquire better eating habits and to plan daily meals with respect to health requirements, also to plan better gardens to insure a year-around supply of the right foods. Nevada has concluded a 15-year 'Keep Growing' project and has begun another. Nevada children now entering school are in much better condition than their older brothers and sisters, 6, 10, and 15 years ago.

"Each year it seems that more farm women and girls make their own clothes under Extension guidance. Patterns are attractive, materials are more interesting, and most women find they can have better quality articles for a given amount of money if they make them themselves. Coat schools have had considerable vogue.

"An Oklahoma woman says: 'Keeping home accounts has shown me just how much the farm contributes toward keeping the family. I had no idea the home used so much of what we raised until I began keeping books.'

"There has been a marked revival of handicraft work in extension groups, particularly in the making of furnishings and accessories in room improvement work. In many of the Southern States, making mattresses out of home-produced cotton is a newly acquired accomplishment for farm people. Some of them have used straw beds for years because of the prohibitive cost of store-made mattresses.

"Elimination of useless furnishings and improvement of rooms in many other ways has interested women in many states. In 15 Michigan counties, the 1937 report says that over 20,000 unnecessary articles were removed before the rooms were refinished and the furniture rearranged.

"Home grounds have been greatly improved in many sections. In one Delaware county the agent found that some of the houses were occupied by tenants who did not think it worth while to improve their surroundings. Nevertheless some of these tenants had been in the same place for 3 to 15 years. A contest was arranged, prizes obtained, and a landscaping school started, with excellent results.

"In North Carolina the home beautification motto is 'Leave Your Bit of the World More Beautiful' and programs include having every home exterior clean and orderly, with fences and outbuildings repaired, machinery under shelter, foundations made solid and screened, plant exchanges established, and signs and dump-heaps removed.

"I'd like to tell you many other interesting activities of extension work. I have much enthusiasm for those community efforts that add enrichment to living—chorus singing, dramatics, reading courses, farm women's camps and short courses, and community activities. But I must sign off for today."

That concludes our Washington letter.

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